GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:464
ANSWERED ON:20.07.2016
Towers in Residential Areas
Reddy Shri Ponguleti Srinivasa

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Human Rights Commission has issued notice to the Government in the wake of allegations in a complaint that mobile towers in the vicinity
of residential areas, emit radiations that are hazardous to human health;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the strategy/measures the Government is adopting/planning to adopt to ensure that no substantive damage is caused to the life and health of human and other living beings;

(d) whether as per Government order dated 21.08.2013, the local self-Government institutions should confirm that the proposed towers do not come within 500 m of schools/hospitals, but it does not cover residential areas and due to this order mobile operators are violating the safe radiation range and are erecting towers in thickly populated residential areas; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and the measures taken by the Government to address the problem?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE (IC) OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS &
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(SHRI MANOJ SINHA)

(a) & (b) Yes, Madam. Law Division of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a notice dated 02-06-2016 in case no. 233/90/0/2016 to Ministry of Communication and Information Technology in respect of a complaint regarding impact of EMF emission from mobile towers on health. A suitable reply to the notice has been submitted to the Commission inter alia bringing out the following:

"With regard to impact of Electromagnetic Field (EMF) emissions from mobile towers on health, World Health Organization (WHO) has referred to approximately 25,000 articles published around the world over past 30 years, and based on an in-depth review of scientific literature, has stated, "Despite the feeling of some people that more research needs to be done, scientific knowledge in this area is now more extensive than for most chemicals." WHO has concluded - "current evidence does not confirm the existence of any health consequences from exposure to low level electromagnetic fields".

WHO in its Fact Sheet No. 304, May 2006 on Electromagnetic Fields and Public Health (Base Stations and Wireless Technologies) has concluded that "From all evidence accumulated so far, no adverse short or long term health effects have been shown to occur from the RF Signals produced by base stationsâ€¦..considering the very low exposure levels and research results collected to date, there is no convincing scientific evidence that the weak RF Signals from base stations and wireless networks caused adverse health effects." Also, in September 2013, WHO in online question and answers have mentioned that "Studies to date provide no indication that environmental exposure to RF fields, such as from base stations, increases the risk of cancer or any other disease."

Further, several High Courts viz Hon'ble High Courts of Punjab & Haryana, Madras, Kerala, Gujarat, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Allahabad have dismissed petitions, where the mobile tower installations were challenged on grounds of health effects of EMF radiations at various locations including residential.

(c) Department of Telecommunications (DoT) have been monitoring global developments and has already taken necessary steps and adopted stricter norms for safety from EMF emmissions from mobile towers. Government of India has been taking due precautions and necessary actions in respect of EMF radiation emitted from mobile towers through various guidelines & norms issued from time to time taking into account the international standards/norms. Presently the norms for exposure limit for the Radio Frequency Field (Base Station Emissions) in India are already 10 times more stringent than the safe limits prescribed by International Commission on Non Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) and recommended by WHO. Further, Government of India has taken adequate steps to ensure that Telecommunications Service Providers strictly adhere to these prescribed norms.

All new mobile Base Transmitting Stations (BTS) sites start radiating commercially only after ensuring adherence to prescribed norms and after submission of self certificate to this effect to relevant Telecom Enforcement Resource & Monitoring (TERM) field offices of DoT. In order to ensure compliance to the prescribed stricter precautionary norms of EMF radiation from mobile tower, the extensive audit of compliance of self-certificates being submitted by telecom service providers and Base Transceiver Station (BTS) sites is

carried out by TERM field units of DoT. In case, any BTS site is found to violate the prescribed EMF norms, actions are taken to put a penalty of Rs. 10 lakh per BTS per incidence including closing of BTS site, if the violation persists. Additionally, the BTS sites against which there are public complaints are also tested by TERM Cell.

(d) & (e) The main conclusion from the WHO reviews is that EMF exposures below the limits recommended in the International Commission on Non Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) international guidelines do not appear to have any known consequence on health. In India norms for exposure limit for the Radio Frequency Field (Base Station Emissions) are already 10 times more stringent than the safe limits prescribed by ICNIRP and recommended by WHO. Making the norms ten times stricter than what has been prescribed by ICNIRP and recommended by WHO, obviates the need for having separate norms for special localities like schools, hospitals and residential areas. Further, Government of India has taken adequate steps to ensure that Telecommunications Service Providers strictly adhere to these prescribed norms.

Accordingly, the advisory guidelines issued by DoT to state governments on 01.08.2013 for issue of clearance for installation of mobile towers do not place any restriction on installation of mobile towers in public buildings/places such as residential areas, schools, hospitals, playground etc.